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Social Media Guidelines: Recommendations for the Development of Undergraduate Pharmacy Student Guidelines





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Introduction

- Social Media (SoMe) is merging personal and professional personas
- Healthcare organisations publish guidance on the responsible use of SoMe
- Lack of understanding by undergraduate (UG) students of how online behaviour relates to the student code of conduct
- Need for guidance which will be directly applicable to the student context

The aim of the study was to develop peer-group designed recommendations for pharmacy student SoMe guidelines

Method

Qualitative activity-based focus groups conducted



Topic guide informed by existing literature and previous study



Themes inducted from analysis of focus groups using the topic guide as a framework



Ethical approval granted by RGU School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences





Results

Focus groups conducted across 4 Stages of MPharm (S1: n=10; S2: n=5; S3: n=8; S4: n=6)

All except one participant (n=29) were aged under 24 with near equal male: female ratio (n=15:14)



The majority did not use SoMe guidelines, despite daily SoMe use, but used personal judgement to decide on appropriate SoMe content



There was no agreement on 'appropriate behaviours'; general concerns emerged around guidance impinging personal personas and impacting perceptions of eprofessionalism



Some elements of existing guidance were seen as valuable but lacked balance of content/tone and examples of appropriate SoMe behaviours

Conclusions

- SoMe guidelines for UG pharmacy students should address concerns surrounding eprofessionalism
- Guidelines should include examples of good practice, yet should contain clear 'points for practice' in a simple, user-friendly format alongside a video or lecture presentation
- Student-specific guidance was viewed as beneficial to support UG students, in particular, with the blurred boundaries between personalprofessional personas

The results of this study have been used to inform the delivery of SoMe support for students with the RGU MPharm course. Further research is being undertaken to explore the definition of appropriate online behaviours and provision of guidance as part of doctoral studies. With thanks to Louise Brown, Cameron MacKay, Liu Ping Nam, Liam Scullion, Lara Seymour and Arran Sidhu for their role in data collection.